

# Video Tape Demonstration Reveals TV as Medium for Self-Expression

By LEE SHERIDEN

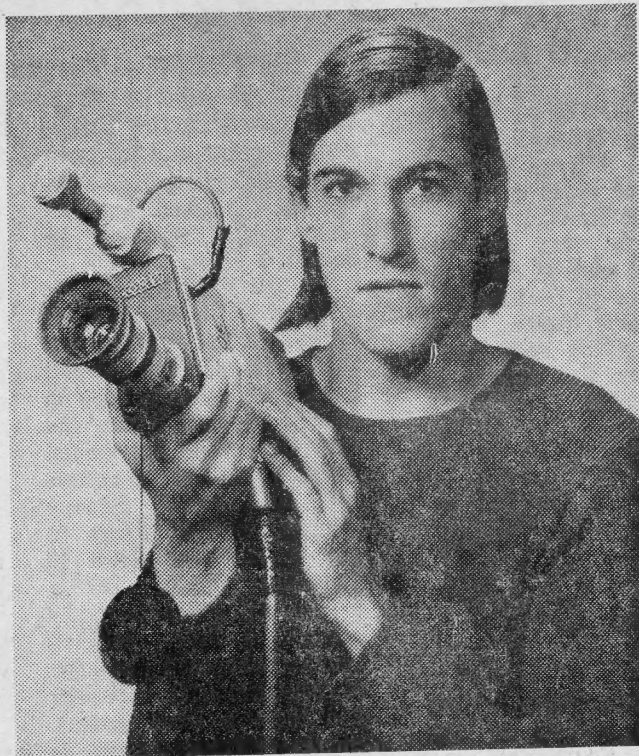
Thanks to Kenneth Dominick of Monson, a master of fine arts graduate student at State University New York in Binghamton, a recent evening's demonstration of video tapes and taping was an exciting introduction to the new concept of television as a medium for self-expression, and therefore its use as an art form.

It was clarifying experience as to how television equipment works, what it will do in the way of performance even when operated by a novice for the first time. It was a convincing experience as to the potential uses of television when it is put into the hands of people to use in their own homes, not as receptors but as creators.

Dominick is coordinator of Binghamton's Community Center for Television Production, under the direction of State University Professor of Art Ralph Hocking, who founded the center two years ago for student use. Backed by a \$50,000 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, he has expanded the project to make television equipment available to anyone in the community who wants to use it instead of watch it.

The result, as demonstrated in an informal, at home setting, is a whole new way of looking at the world — and at yourself.

Imagine looking at your own cellar on your own TV screen, at your own sons and their friends down there in their darkroom discussing photographs they have made, seeing and hearing their characteristic gestures and mannerisms, observing their relationship with each other. What comes through is a situation of unbelievable intimacy, as vivid and as valid as the pictures of that familiar cellar ceiling, the light bulb, the peeling bark on the old beams.



Kenneth Dominick holds a portable television camera for home use.

After seeing this tape and others — people picking apples in a neighbor's orchard, a stroll around a traveling circus being set up, a visit to Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant, an 85-year-old grandmother talking about today's young people — it was possible to fully appreciate Dominick's statements about the objectives and functions of personal video taping.

"The major part of the philosophy behind it is that the mass appeal programming of commercial television is not human," he said. "It really doesn't concern people's personal lives."

Dominick explained that in personal video taping "you can be much more human in your approach because you just let people talk on." There is nothing like Hollywood casting, no directing, no timing. He described it as a medium by which "people create information about themselves, by themselves."

This was powerfully

that although experience will achieve more sophisticated artistic results, "anyone can get good results with a television camera," that "any film will be good if you can look at it five minutes after it's made because of the immediacy of the whole thing."

It was also overwhelming proof of his statement that personal television "can feed back so much information about a person in his own life, his own way of thinking, help him change it or work with it." One 20-minute tape sufficed as a revelation of the capacity of this medium for making it possible to see one's self in a new way — not from the accustomed "inside yourself" view, but by getting outside of yourself, perceiving your own identity.

Anyone who has had even one such evening's demonstration will be stimulated by the imaginative possibilities of the use of video tape for the enrichment of both personal and community life. He will also be envious of the people of Binghamton, who may simply walk into the Community Center for Television Production and walk out with the equipment and the freedom to produce their own television.

demonstrated in the tape of children at Bedford - Stuyvesant, a documentary without the intrusion of the "documenter." In this and other tapes, people take over their own story, express themselves as they really are. There is none of the devastating cruelty, so common in commercial TV news programs, of watching people reacting in public to private tragedy, but instead a picture of people being themselves with each other in their own environment.

The culmination of the evening's demonstration was the actual use by members of the group present of camera, microphone, and tape, followed by the video tape's "instant replay" on the TV screen.

This was the convincing proof of Dominick's assertion